

# My wife had a facelift...so I decided that I'd have one too

*Last year we published the story of Maureen Ingram, a 48 year-old beautician who had flown from her home in Lincoln to New York for a £10,000 face-lift. Now her husband Neil, 50, has been to Dr. Michael Evan Sachs in New York for the same treatment - a full face-lift and nose job costing £12,000. Both took out bank loans to help cover the cost. Here, Neil, a photographer, talks about taking what is an extremely rare step for a man, while Maureen reveals how she feels about having a husband with a facelift.*

**GILLIAN CRAWLEY REPORTS....**

Compared to Maureen I felt old for some time. It was nothing to do with her having a face-lift; it was just that I was ageing faster than she was.

But after she had the operation the difference between us was even more marked. I must admit I sometimes felt like her father!

Jealousy never came into it. It meant a lot to Maureen to have this done; in terms of the way she saw herself and the way she felt others saw her. So I was never anything but pleased for her. But suddenly I felt very conscious of being 50 and looking every minute of it.

I probably don't seem the obvious candidate for plastic surgery. I have never been fashion conscious, arty or particularly fussy about my appearance, I'm happy in my favourite jeans and T-shirts. I suppose part of this comes from the job I used to do - I was in the oil industry and worked on rigs as an engineer.

Yet the ageing process I felt wasn't just wrinkles and bags under my eyes, it was more complicated than just vanity. The whole view of yourself and the way others see you is wrapped up in your looks. I found myself thinking: "Hang on, I can't do that, I'm middle aged."

As you get older, it's not your

personality that changes; you just end up changing your habits to suit your looks. I had always told myself: "You're as young as you feel" but I now know that was a bit of self-deception.

It's true that age is kinder to men. I think women have drawn the short straw there. The time when everything heads south comes sooner for them but it does come for men too.

There's an age where men peak - somewhere between 30 and 40 and from then on all you have to look forward to is becoming an old man.

You cling to the myth that men improve with age.

I defy anyone to look at the "before" pictures of me and still say that with a straight face.

They say a man of 50 can have his pick of women - from his own age down to a girl of 20. That's nonsense. What attracts a young girl is the money and power an older man may have, or she thinks he has.

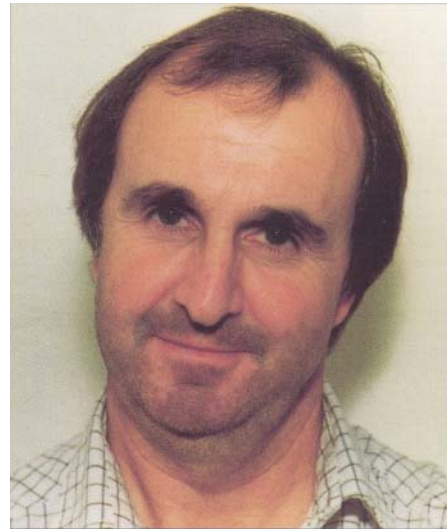
When I'm driving my van I don't get a second glance. But I've also got a sporty £22,000 Toyota MR2 and when I'm driving that, the girls look. I don't kid myself it's me they're staring at.

I didn't seriously think about cosmetic surgery until about 18 months ago. Maureen had been to see the surgeon and was determined to have her operation. It's been a slow process for me.

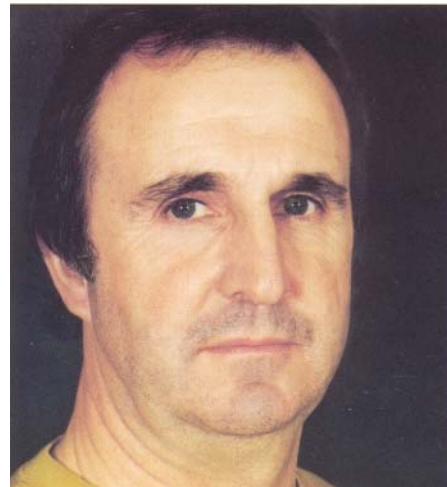
I wasn't worried about the way it would turn out. I had only to look at my wife to see what a success it had been. But I did wonder whether I could handle the ridicule and comments I expected from others.

As a man you are conscious of the attitude of other men. Women are more relaxed with the idea of cosmetic surgery, at least for themselves, but it's not manly to be seen to worry about your looks. People can just about understand it if you are in show business, where your looks are important. But no other man is meant to care. However, I was determined to go ahead.

I know people will say we're both mad paying all that money, but I think it's



Neil as he was



**Bags packed away: Neil and Maureen as they are now, after spending £22,000 on cosmetic surgery**

silly spending a fortune on a three-week holiday to Thailand which is forgotten as soon as you get back.

I wasn't that nervous about the operation but I do think it is natural to have some apprehension. After all, the surgeon is going to make cuts down either side of my face, realign my muscle tissue and then sew it all back. I know that sounds cold and mechanical but the idea interested me as an engineer. In some ways I wish I could have watched it.

Maureen and I flew out on the Sunday and checked into a hotel and I went to the clinic on the Tuesday. Afterwards I didn't look too bad. I had a little bit of blood and a bruise under the skin of the right cheek. I left the clinic on the Wednesday after an overnight stay.

On the Thursday the two inch thick protective helmet they had given me was removed and I was left with a bandage wrapped round my head like a ski mask, leaving my face sticking out, tapes around the eyes

and a plaster over my nose.

I was told not to eat anything except soup, so I wouldn't disturb the muscles by chewing.

I followed all the instructions. I took it very easy, as opposed to Maureen who went off shopping while she still had her bandages on. Even though the operation itself isn't painful, it still represents a whopping shock to the system.

After six days all the dressings were off and we turned the trip into a holiday. My first "coming out" back home was at a dinner party on New Year's Eve, given by friends who knew

about the operation. I kept wondering what people would say. In the end nobody said a word, though they were all taking sly glances.

But the main thing is that I'm happy. I'm certainly no film star and I never wanted to change myself beyond recognition. All I wanted was to knock off a few years and I've certainly done that.

I expected an improvement in my looks - what I wasn't prepared for was the massive boost in my self-confidence. There's a spring in my step and I feel better about the whole world.